

was proposed by Mr. Slater, as the type of a peculiar family, *Leptosomidæ*. This should be placed in the series of Passeriform Anomalogonathous birds as defined by Prof. Garrod¹, next to the *Coraciidæ*, with which its relations are most intimate. Indeed it is possible that, when the anatomy of the allied genera, *Brachypteracias*, *Geobiastes*, and *Atelornis*² becomes fully known, the truth of Mr. Sharpe's proposition³, that *Leptosoma* should be relegated to the position merely of a subfamily of the *Coraciidæ*, may be established.

4. On two rare Ploceine Birds now or lately living in the Society's Menagerie. By W. A. FORBES, B.A., F.L.S.,
Prosecutor to the Society.

[Received June 2, 1880.]

(Plate XLVII.)

1. *VIDUA SPLENDENS*. (Plate XLVII. fig. 1.)

Vidua splendens, Reichen. Orn. Centralbl. 1879, p. 114.

On the 17th of July, 1878, Mr. Archibald Brown presented to the Society, with some other birds, a specimen of a small Weaver-bird, which, being then "out of colour," was entered on the list of additions as *Vidua principalis*, the common and well-known "Pin-tailed Whydah bird." Last summer this bird had assumed an entirely blue-black plumage, like that of *Hypochera nitens*, also a common cage-bird. But I was struck by the appearance of the beak and feet, these being of a bright coral-red colour, whereas in *H. nitens* they are only pale flesh-coloured. The tail-feathers, too, were slightly tipped with white, and the two central ones became gradually slightly more lengthened than the others, and so projected beyond them. The accompanying figure (Plate XLVII. fig. 1) shows the appearance of this bird at that time, as sketched from life by Mr. Smit. Unfortunately it died on the 29th of March in the present year, being then in very poor plumage, as it was moulting; on dissection it proved to be a male. Thinking I had here a new species of *Hypochera* to deal with, I took the skin with me, on a late visit to Berlin, to show to Drs. Hartlaub, Cabanis, and Reichenow. The latter gentleman speedily recognized this bird as the young male of a species he had lately described from E. Africa as *Vidua splendens* (Orn. Centralbl. 1879, p. 114). Of this only a single specimen was collected at Kibaradja, E. Africa, by Dr. Fischer, and is now in the Berlin Museum. A sketch from this bird is reproduced in the distant figure of the accompanying Plate; as will be seen from it, the male bird, when fully adult, possesses enormously elongated rectrices, the two of each

¹ P. Z. S. 1874, p. 119, and *l. c.* 1878, p. 99.

² The osteology of these genera, with some other points, is figured in Grandidier's work on pls. 97-99, 101, 102, 103a.

³ Ibis, 1871, p. 187.

side fitting into each other, so that at first sight there only appear to be *two* on each side. The excess of these four central tail-feathers over the other rectrices is, in this specimen, nearly 6 inches: in the young male that lived in our Gardens, there are only two lengthened feathers, which project only to the extent of $\frac{1}{5}$ inch. If our bird had lived, the other two tail-feathers would, no doubt, have been duly developed, the birds in other respects being nearly similar. In our specimen all the rectrices, including the two central ones, are slightly tipped with white: the eyes were very dark red-brown. *Vidua splendens* is perhaps most like *Vidua hypocherina* of Verreaux¹; from that species it can be at once distinguished by the absence of the white, elongated rump-feathers. *Vidua (Hypochera) nitens* is also entirely blue-black, but has *no* lengthened rectrices, and, moreover, has the feet and beak flesh-colour; in *V. principalis* the beak is also bright red, but the feet are fleshy, besides many other differences. The discovery of this bird renders, in my opinion, the retention of the genus *Hypochera*, founded by Bonaparte² in 1850, for *Fringilla nitens* unnecessary—the males of *V. splendens* and *V. principalis*, as well as probably *V. hypocherina*³ when in winter plumage, as well as the females and young males at all times, being indistinguishable by any characters, structural or otherwise, from that section of the group including *V. nitens* and *V. nigerrima* (*Hypochera nigerrima*, Sharpe, P. Z. S. 1871, p. 133), in which the male has, in nuptial plumage, no elongated rectrices.

Our specimen was said to be from the "east coast of Africa," a fact rendered probable by the arrival along with it of specimens of *Euplectes nigriventris*⁴, a truly eastern species.

2. PYTELIA WIENERI. (Plate XLVII. fig. 2.)

Pytelia wieneri, Finsch, Gef. Welt, Aug. 9, 1877.

Pytelia cinereigula, Cab. Orn. Centralb. Dec. 1, 1877, et J. f. O. 1878, p. 101.

In the 'Gefiederte Welt' (6th Jahrg. no. 32, p. 317) for Aug. 9th, 1877, Dr. Finsch described as new, under the above title, a species of *Pytelia*, of which Mr. A. F. Wiener, F.Z.S., had purchased four living specimens in London, supposed to be from "Australia." On June 18th, 1879, Mr. Wiener presented one of these specimens to the Society, which is still (May 31) living in the Parrot-house in good health. From it the accompanying drawing has been taken (Plate XLVII. fig. 2).

In the 'Ornithologisches Centralblatt' for Dec. 1, 1877 (p. 182),

¹ *Vidua hypocherina*, J. and E. Verreaux, Rev. et Mag. Zool. 1856, p. 260, t. 16.

² C. R. xxxi, p. 434.

³ *Vidua superciliosa* (Vieill. Gal. Ois. pl. 61) I only know by the plate and descriptions: it is said to have only *two* elongated rectrices; as there are said to be ten of the ordinary length, this statement is therefore probably correct.

⁴ Cassin, J. Ac. Phil. 1849, p. 242, pl. xxxi. fig. 1. Erroneously entered in the register (P. Z. S. 1878, p. 1008) as *E. oryx*. Cf. List Vert. 1st suppl. 1879, p. 65.

Dr. Cabanis described a *Pytelia*¹ *cinereigula*, of which there had been two specimens lately received at the Berlin Museum from East Africa. One of these had been collected at Zanzibar by Dr. Fischer, the second at Mombassa by Drs. Hildebrandt and von Kalkreuth. During my late visit to Berlin I at once recognized in this species Finsch's *Pytelia wieneri*; and by the kindness of Drs. Cabanis and Reichenow I was allowed to bring back with me to London a third skin of the same bird, still more lately received, and collected in Angola, at Malange. A comparison of this with our living bird has quite confirmed the opinion I had already arrived at, so that Cabanis's name must yield to Finsch's². The Australian habitat is, of course, a mistake, *Pytelia* being an entirely African form. Of the red-beaked section of *Pytelia*, to which it belongs, *P. wieneri* can only be confused with *P. melba* and its ally (or geographical form) *P. citerior*. The differences between these and the bird under consideration have already been pointed out by Drs. Finsch and Cabanis in their descriptions; suffice it to say that *P. wieneri* is at once, *inter alia*, distinguished from these by its very different markings below, and also by the red of the chin and throat being separated from the greenish-yellow of the lower parts by the interposition of a grey band. In our living bird the beak is bright red and the feet pink; the irides are dark red.

5. Note on a Specimen of Denham's Bustard (*Eupodotis denhami*). By W. A. FORBES, B.A., F.L.S., Prosector to the Society.

[Received June 2, 1880.]

The interest attached to the existence, or otherwise, of special mechanisms connected with the habit of "showing off" in the males of the Otididæ, together with the fact of the subject of the present note being of a species rarely seen in captivity, so that some time may elapse before a further opportunity of examination offers itself, must be my excuse for this short and imperfect notice.

On March 20, 1872, two specimens of *Eupodotis denhami*, from W. Africa, I believe, the first and only ones of this species possessed by the Society, were presented by Governor Uesher and C. D. O'Connor, Esq. Of these one lived in good health in the Gardens for many years, dying on May 12 last, after having been attacked by a companion hen of *Otis tarda* that was in the same enclosure with it. Having never observed any signs of "showing off" in this bird, I had always considered it to be a female. This surmise, however, proved incorrect, for on dissection it turned out to be a male.

¹ This description is reproduced in the J. f. O. 1878, p. 101. I may here remark that, in my opinion, *Pytelia*, though perhaps a "nonsense name," is sufficiently "like Latin" to be retained, and not replaced by "*Zonogastriis*," or altered into "*Pytilia*," as proposed by Dr. Cabanis (*l. c.* p. 100).

² I also found a single specimen of this bird, with no precise locality, in the Museum at Hamburg.